



**Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
MARATHON COUNTY

# February 2024 Report

*We teach, learn, lead, and serve,  
connecting people with the University of Wisconsin, and engaging with  
them in transforming lives and communities.*

## **4-H – Positive Youth Development**

**Holly Luerssen, 4-H Program Educator**

**Jasmine Carbajal, 4-H Associate Educator**

- The 2024 Teen Leadership Winter Camp was a collaboration between Lincoln, Langlade, Marathon, Wood, and Shawano Counties 4-H Programs and staff members to provide a meaningful experience for older youth to connect with relationships, new skills and sparks, and dive into information around values and multiple intelligences and how they guide our thinking. An overall theme of perseverance, grit, and safely failing were emphasized during the 3 day, 2 night experience. Youth experienced interactive learning individually, in small groups, and in large-scale teams to try new skills such as building a marble run, tie dying, tying lanyards, cooking and trying new foods (plantains), glass etching, engineering electrical circuits, team building, creating skits, completing a team scavenger hunt and more. Despite the lack of snow, youth reported an enjoyable experience where they learned about themselves, each other, and how they can use their natural gifts to serve their 4-H Clubs and Communities.
- The Marathon County 4-H educators have a goal of engaging more older youth (6th grade and up) in local programming in order to retain them until the end of their 4-H career and longer. One of the new ideas was to offer a chance for youth to be detectives. Eight youth registered and attended the "Cold Case" event where they had to use their critical thinking, problem-solving, and team building skills to solve the case. Participants filled out an evaluation regarding the event. 88% of youth reported meeting someone new. 75% reported using new skills to solve the case. 100% of participants reported having fun and that they would participate in this type of activity again.
- Marathon County 4-H formed a partnership with Marathon County Public Library-Wausau to offer a hands-on and educational activity where youth in Kindergarten and older learned how to make easy, no-bake treats, with a Valentine's Day theme. Eighteen youth registered and fifteen attended. Eleven of the eighteen attendees were not enrolled 4-H members. This shows that our partnership with the library is helping us give access to 4-H programming to new audiences. Fourteen of fifteen participants filled out an evaluation of the program. 100% of evaluation responders reported having fun, making treats that were easy, and trying something new.
- Marathon County 4-H was invited by the Marathon County Public Library-Wausau to offer a 4-H program to youth in the community about LEDs and Circuits. Sixteen youth learned about how LEDs work. Each participant made a LED Minecraft style torch. Youth were also able to work with SNAP Circuits. Thanks to





partnerships like these, we have been able to bring 4-H programming to youth that are not members. Out of the twenty-six youth that signed up, only one was an enrolled member.

- 4-H Foodie has been a popular program in Marathon County. The goal of the program is to expose youth to diverse foods and cultures, practice basic kitchen skills, and learn about food safety practices. The Art of Making Arepas was born in partnership with PYD educator, Ely Moya. Ely is Venezuelan and she led a class for colleagues about making arepas. Arepas are a Venezuelan food. Bilingual 4-H Associate Educator, Jasmine Carbajal, asked Ely to use her recipe and invited her to be a virtual guest speaker for the Foodie class.

Eleven youth registered for the class and eight attended. Three of the eight youth were not enrolled members which shows that the program reached new audiences. 38% of attendees reported learning about a new culture. 100% of participants reported trying something new. All participants had fun and some of the favorite parts of the lesson were cooking a food that was different and learning about a new culture.

## Agriculture

### Heather Schlessor, Dairy Agent

- In 2021, a series of focus groups were held to identify what stressors farmers exhibit and why they do not seek help for these stressors. One major reason participants do not seek help is a disconnect between the farming and medical communities. Focus group participants indicated that they did not feel health care providers understood them. The purpose of this event was to break down the barrier of disconnect. For this event, we discussed the results of the focus groups with the medical community and agriculture professionals in attendance. As a result of these efforts, those in attendance are aware of the farming subculture and better understand that when a farmer seeks help, it is an emergency situation. Based on participant comments and evaluation feedback, there was an increased awareness of the farming subculture and the stoicism that exist among farmers. Participants recognized that they need to take extra care when working with farmers to connect with them. As a result of this event, healthcare professionals are better poised to assist farmers' mental and physical needs.
- The Repro Roadshow was a multi-location, in-person program, that provided the latest research-based information to improve the understanding of current timed AI protocols for use with sexed semen for dairy professionals.

In this meeting, Extension Specialist Dr. Paul Fricke and Assistant Professor Dr. JP Martins discussed their labs' latest findings on the application of sexed semen in dairy herds and Timed AI protocols. One hundred percent of participants answering the evaluation poll (n=70) said "yes" to the question, "I have gained new insights on how to help me or my clients optimize conception rates and manage breeding in my herd." Local dairy educators presented on the impacts of Stress or Strain on reproduction, with one hundred percent of participants answering the poll saying yes to the question "I have increased my understanding of how stress can affect the occurrence of disease." Overall, 99% of participants indicated they were somewhat or very likely to share information from the workshops with others, and that information from the workshop improved their understanding of ways to optimize fertility in their herds (Ave. 4.04; scale 1=a little; 5=a lot). On hundred and fifty-six people participated, representing dairy farmers, educators, and industry



professionals. Participants completing the evaluation poll (n=70) indicated they own, or impacted the management, of over 250,100 cows.

- Developing teaching and marketing materials for the UW-Madison Division of Extension Wisconsin Dairy Reproduction Roadshow, a multi-location in-person series for dairy producers and industry professionals to improve their herd's reproductive performance and increase their economic sustainability.
- Developing a Planning for Emergency Livestock Transportation Response (PELTR) hybrid training in collaboration with Waukesha County Emergency Management and the Humane Animal Welfare Society (HAWS) of Waukesha for area and statewide emergency response personnel to learn about responding to roadside incidents involving livestock trailers. The purpose of this program is to increase the effectiveness of emergency planning and the preparedness of local emergency response agencies.

## **FoodWise**

**Mallory McGivern, FoodWise Administrator**

**Michelle Van Krey, Healthy Communities Coordinator**

**Julia Perock, FoodWise Educator**

- Shared leadership in the Marathon County Hunger Coalition, where emphasis is placed on expanding healthy food access and developing new projects and partnerships that will empower Marathon County families through education and shared resources. The coalition's goal is to increase access to healthy foods in order to achieve health equity for all county residents.
- A 5-week nutrition education series for 3rd grade classrooms at Lincoln Elementary School, where students learn about the importance of eating from the five food groups, try new fruits and vegetables, and learn how food and physical activity can help them now and in the future. This effort was designed to make healthy eating a positive experience which will help students make healthier food choices in the future.
- Working with partners in Clark, Marathon, Portage and Wood Counties to build a new platform that directly focuses on food access mapping for those with limited incomes. The goal of this effort is to provide current, reliable food access information for all community stakeholders in Central Wisconsin and the state.

## **Horticulture**

**Janell Wehr, Horticulture Educator**

- A program (Romaine Calm and Garden On Session 1) for Mosinee residents, where participants learned proper site and cultivar selection for vegetable gardening. This effort is designed to increase awareness and knowledge of resources to decrease environmental contamination. The Objectives for this program include:
  - Requirements for siting a vegetable garden & choosing cultivars
  - Distinguish vegetable classification by season of growth
  - Define the vegetable planting techniques of succession/sequential planting
  - Identify the steps to preparing a planting bedAs a result of attending the program, 15 participants reported the following:



87% shared they understood the requirements for garden siting and cultivation selection of vegetables.  
100% could distinguish vegetable classification by season of growth (cold season vs warm season plants)  
80% could define succession and sequential planting.  
100% could identify the steps to prepare a planting bed.

- A program for the North Central Wisconsin Master Gardeners, where members learned the proper techniques for pruning fruit trees. The goal of this effort is designed to increase awareness and knowledge of resources to decrease environmental contamination.
- "Can you dig it?" newsletter for the general public, where subscribers can read timely articles specifically related to horticulture issues facing central Wisconsin. The goal of this effort is designed to increase awareness and knowledge of resources to decrease environmental contamination.
- Two presentations for Garden Visions attendees, where participants identified steps to take to support beneficial insects. The goal of this effort is designed to increase awareness and knowledge of resources to decrease environmental contamination.
- A diagnostic service for the general public, where Marathon and Wood County residents' horticultural inquiries are answered through evidence-based resources. This effort is designed to reduce pollution through horticultural product (pesticides and fertilizers) misuse.
- Developing informal learning communities utilizing the Horticulture Program's social media for all Wisconsin gardeners, including underserved populations. The goal of this effort is to provide accurate, practical and up-to-date information to the public primarily through the topic hub in order to foster engagement and bolster educational outreach efforts in support of addressing the Horticulture Program objectives.

## **Natural Resources**

Kris Tiles, NRI Program Manager

Anna James, Regional Natural Resources Educator

- A facilitated discussion for producers and conservation professionals in the Springbrook and Upper Eau Claire River watersheds where participants will learn about the Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant Program. The goal of this meeting is for producers to identify conservation related concerns, local stakeholders, and engagement/commitment in order to determine if forming a producer-led watershed protection group is in the best interest of the environment and community members.
- A collaborative planning effort between Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Petenwell and Castle Rock Stewards (PACRS) to gather all citizen led water protection and restoration groups in the greater Wisconsin River basin area. The goal of this effort is to increase collaboration amongst the groups, identify goals and initiatives for improving water quality, and assess community needs.
- A survey of agencies and organizations that support farmer-led watershed groups in Wisconsin was conducted to better understand how these groups are functioning and the nature of support they receive from their partners. Results of the survey will be used to inform decisions about what types of support are most beneficial and most needed by the farmer-led groups.



## **Additional Extension Outreach Programming Occurring in Marathon County**

- A 6- session wellness series (WeCOPE) for childcare providers where they learned different strategies that support awareness of mind-body connection. The goal of this effort is to offer skills to decrease stress and increase positive emotions of participants.
- A 7-session course, Planning AHEAD that helps adults of all ages to make end-of-life financial, healthcare, and final wishes decisions in order to reduce the stress experienced by survivors and to ensure that their wishes are honored.
- Program planning for Dean's Innovation Grant award to provide well water testing to farmers with employee housing to test water quality for underserved audiences. The goal of this program is to incentivize water testing for farms to ensure drinking water is safe for human consumption.

## **Upcoming Programs**

- **4-H Programming** – Information at [marathon.extension.wisc.edu/projects/programs/](https://marathon.extension.wisc.edu/projects/programs/)
- **Horticultural Programs** – Information at <https://marathon.extension.wisc.edu/horticulture/programs/>

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